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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8146  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 5863  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 3743  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2235  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 6954  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0881  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4320  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0547  
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INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 6690

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/US, Iraq, Palestinian  
Territories, Lebanon (4/4)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers reported the meeting of Dr. Buthaina Shabaan, Minister of Expatriates, with a US delegation from the Churches Panel for Peace in the Middle East. The meeting tackled practical and constructive means to deepen dialogue and communication and to bolster common grounds to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region and the world.

Dr. Buthaina Shabaan hailed the action of the group of US churches to espouse peace and face fanaticism and warmongers, saying that their visit to the region was an important source of facts.

On Lebanon, papers featured a statement by Ali Qansu, Chairman of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party in Lebanon, reiterating the importance of distinguished relations between Syria and Lebanon, and warning against attempts to damage these relations.

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Minister of Expatriates Buthaina Shaaban reviews the regional situation with a delegation representing the American Churches for Middle East Peace. The American delegation: We work to support Syria and achieve justice and peace" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/4)

"British, American and Croatian companies to start oil exploration in northern Syria by end of April" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/4)

"Lebanese national dialogue among all factions to continue on April 28. Lebanese MPs and figures emphasize support for the resistance and for reactivating protocols of cooperation with Syria" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/4)

"Five US soldieries killed, three missing in al-Anbar province. Rice and Straw: We will not interfere in Iraqi affairs; We want a strong prime minister" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/4)

"Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos calls on Europe

to boost ties with the Islamic world" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/4)

"Moscow confirms cold relation with Washington: We possess what is sufficient to confront any NATO assault" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/4)

### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Rice's Acknowledgement"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (4/4): "Why have US Secretary of State Rice and British Home Office Secretary Straw come to Iraq? Have they succeeded in putting the Iraqi house, which their countries have destroyed, in order?"

"Rice expressed her anger over the delay in the formation of a new Iraqi government....

"These two countries' interference in Iraqi affairs has become a daily routine.... Has Rice come to Iraq to correct some of the mistakes she said the United State has committed in Iraq?"

"The acknowledgement of mistakes will not compensate for the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and for the destruction of the country."

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"Claims on Democracy"

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Adnan Nasir, a columnist in government-owned Al-Ba'th, wrote (4/4): "The victory of HAMAS in the Palestinian elections shows that US policy in the region has failed....

"The US Administration has rejected the will of a nation to choose its representatives fairly and freely in accordance with Western criteria.... The United States has launched a starvation campaign against the Palestinian people to force them to abandon their choice....

"If US President Bush does not recognize the results of the democratic process in Palestine, his slogans will lose their meaning.... The current Bush administration adopted Sharon's policies, supported Zionist terrorism against the Palestinian people, and recognized major settlements in the West Bank....

"How could Bush and Sharon hold negotiations on the future of the Palestinians in isolation from the Palestinian leaders? Moreover, the Bush administration has decided to besiege and isolate HAMAS and to prevent other countries from contacting HAMAS leaders...."

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